

Digital Text Tools

Tool	How it supports reading/learning
Highlighting	<p>Highlighting key words and phrases helps students to quickly gather information while reading, without having to write it down or hold it in their mind (particularly when it's combined with annotations). Some platforms will generate an outline from highlighted sections.</p> <p>Teaching tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Remind students to be sparing in their use of highlighting and to use it in combination with annotation if possible. Otherwise, they may highlight too much and forget why the highlighted section was important or meaningful when they go back to it later.
Annotating	<p>Especially when combined with highlighting, annotation features allow students to summarize the key points or explain the importance of the highlighted section. Some platforms will generate a compilation of all annotations across the text, which can aid students in summarizing the text or organizing their ideas for an essay or project.</p> <p>Teaching tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage students to take notes about what the text makes them think of, their opinions about it, connections with other texts, any questions or confusions they might have, etc. These kinds of notes keeps students conscious of the reasons they're reading a text and what they're aiming to get out of it, and will help them make connections to the larger picture• Encourage students to ask themselves as they take notes: What does this mean? Why is the writer drawing that conclusion?
Text-to-speech (with or without highlighting)	<p>TTS allows students to access text through listening. It can be particularly useful for students who struggle with reading, as it allows them to focus on comprehension and sustain engagement with challenging texts. TTS is also helpful for students with visual impairments. Some TTS features highlight words as they're read (sometimes referred to as audio-supported reading), allowing the student to follow the text visually. The combination of seeing and hearing can aid in reading and comprehension, and supports attention. Some TTS features allow students to modify the volume, speed, and voice of the audio reading to suit their needs and preferences.</p> <p>Teaching tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let students know they have the option to use TTS any time they choose to, regardless of their reading ability• Emphasize that TTS is available for everyone, and provide all students with headphones, whether or not they specifically request them. This will enable everyone to feel comfortable participating in audio-supported reading• If audio-supported reading is available, show students that they can follow along with the highlighted words as they listen to the text. Show them how TTS can be used to re-read, slow down, and select particular text of interest

<p>Audio narration</p>	<p>Audio narration is similar to text-to-speech in that it reads aloud digital text. With audio narration though, it is a human voice reading the text. Because the voice is human, it includes changes in tone and emotion, and pauses the reading in natural places. This more natural tone of reading can help students become more engaged in the content, particularly when reading a longer piece of text like a book or short story. Audio narration can also decrease frustration for students who struggle with decoding, allowing them to focus more on the meaning of the text.</p> <p>Teaching tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If both audio narration and text-to-speech are available, demonstrate both features to students and explain their similarities and differences, as well as the benefits and drawbacks of each. Encourage students to try both features and compare their experiences • Encourage students to follow along with the text on the screen as the audio narration is playing
<p>Speech recognition</p>	<p>Speech recognition, or voice recognition, allows the student to talk to a device (like a computer or smartphone) and have his or her words appear on the screen. This kind of software can provide students with a quick way to record their thoughts and ideas, without pausing to write type them or write them down. Speech recognition can be particularly helpful for students who struggle with spelling or typing, as it allows them to capture their ideas more quickly and easily than writing them out using a keyboard.</p> <p>Teaching tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let students know they have the option to use speech recognition any time they choose, regardless of their writing ability, and emphasize that speech recognition is available for everyone • Model for students how to use speech recognition to take notes or compose a piece of writing
<p>Dictionary/vocabulary support</p>	<p>Dictionary supports allow students to view (and sometimes hear) the definition of any word in the text. Some texts have glossaries of key terms that can be linked to directly from the word within the body of text. These features are helpful for students who struggle with vocabulary.</p> <p>Teaching tips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage students to make use of a dictionary feature when they come across a word they are unfamiliar with. If TTS features are available, they can have the definition read aloud to them to help with their comprehension.
<p>Translation</p>	<p>Translation tools allow students to translate text from English to another language (most commonly, Spanish). Just as important, students can also translate from another language to English. Some translation features translate word by word only, while others can translate whole sentences and sections of text. Some translation features provide audio translation.</p>

Font selection (size, type, color, contrast)	<p>The ability to change the size, color, contrast, and type of font can help students (particularly those with visual impairments or reading and learning disabilities) read text more easily.</p> <p>Teaching tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage students to experiment with different font types and sizes, to find the settings that work best for them.
Links to multimedia	<p>Some digital texts embed or contain links to related videos, graphics, websites, or audio recordings. These types of multimedia can support students by providing background knowledge or in-depth information on a particular topic, and help engage students by illustrating content through multiple modalities.</p> <p>Teaching tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage students to explore multimedia in digital texts to support their comprehension of the content. You can also encourage them to look for additional media sources that are related to the topic of the text they are reading, and to share what they find with their peers.